



Did you know the Lodi complex boasts of six ancient structures, including a bridge? DHW will tell you the story behind it all.

# A toast to history

It's a crime to live in Delhi unaware of its rich heritage; a group of history fans is out to purge the Capital of the sin



Dr. Manmohan Singh  
Hon'ble Prime Minister



Smt. Krishna Tirath  
Hon'ble MOS (I/C), WCD

By Nidhi Mittal Bansal

IT'S AN afternoon with the first serious hints of winter and a motley group is walking across the ramparts of a centuries-old structure with keen ears and loud opinions on what could have happened there ages ago.

For Delhizens who have been a part of one of these tours organised by Delhi Heritage Walks (DHW) every weekend, the bustling, populated city means more now than it ever did.

Each corner of Delhi has a story to tell. Take Lodi Garden, for instance. Several centuries meet at this favourite haunt of morning walkers. As Moby Sara Zachariah, a DHW walk leader, will tell you: "There is the tomb of Mohammad Shah Sayyed, a ruler of the 15th century. And the tomb is surrounded by bottle palm trees that were imported by the British in the 19th century."

Founded in 2009, DHW is one of the many heritage walk groups that have sprouted in the Capital, but it was the first to make the walks more organised and to come up with a monthly calendar. "As students, my friends and I used to go for casual heritage walks but what disappointed us was the fact that there was no one to answer our questions. We were also never sure when and where the next heritage walk would take place," says DHW co-founder Kanika Singh.

From Chandni Chowk, Hauz Khas Village, Lodi Garden to Mehrauli Archeological Park, Kashmere Gate and Jama Masjid; from Tughluqabad Fort and Old Fort to Ferozeshah Kotla and the Northern Ridge near Delhi University, the DHW takes its walkers through the history of all these monuments. Each walk makes the enthusiasts understand the architectural excellence of each structure and the story behind it.

"The best part about these walks — apart from getting a chance to look at old structures with an intelligent eye — is the way Kanika and other leaders narrate the stories of these monuments," says Manisha Sharma, 35, an environment consultant who, after being a part of all DHW walks, now goes for only the unique ones.

"History doesn't remain boring once these people start telling you about the heritage



DHW walk leader Kanika takes visitors through Kashmere Gate

<b>30</b>	<b>2,000</b>	<b>₹250</b>
is the average number of people who join a walk	is the number of regular walkers on the mailing list of DHW	is the per-person charge for the weekly DHW walks

It takes a lot of time to weave a story around an area, all based on facts. It could be a standalone grave or a majestic building, but everything that you tell the walkers should hold their interest

— KANIKA SINGH, co-founder, DHW



go back home satisfied when they get all the answers. And it is these expressions of satisfaction that encourage the leaders to keep going through the same walks week after week. We love to tell people about these lesser-known structures and areas in Delhi," she adds.

All the DHW walk leaders are students of history. Kanika Singh, 28, who is working on a Ph.D from Ambedkar University, has taught History at IGNOU and always been interested in the architecture of medieval India. Another walk leader, Awadhesh Tripathi, became a part of the initiative when he was pursuing his Ph.D at JNU.

"Their perfect knowledge of each and every monument reflects in the simple storytelling manner with which they talk to you during the heritage walks," says Barkha Banka, a tour consultant from Raipur. "These walks are a must for me whenever I come to Delhi."

sites. I have always been keen to know about the city where I have lived since 1983," Sharma adds. The last "unique walk" she undertook was at the Ferozeshah Kotla, near ITO.

"It was special because I didn't know that this monument existed," Sharma continues. "For me, Ferozeshah Kotla stood for the cricket stadium. And the stories around this monument are so interesting." Many Del-

hizens have expressed surprise after DHW walks as most of the monuments in the Capital are not that well-known. The idea behind these heritage walks is to bring residents closer to the city's rich history.

"Delhiites are non-historians, but when they listen, they do so with utmost curiosity," says Zachariah, who's pursuing her M.A. in history at JNU. "They ask questions and

**DHW also organises customised walks for families, expats, photographers, architects and corporates**



ENTRY FREE

davp 46101/13/0020/1213